

LAC BLEU, JUNE 2013

Adam Pearce

Friday 21st / Saturday 22nd

Dazzer Wickson, Wayne Geller, Ian Knott and I set off to Dover on our first fishing trip to France. The first part of our journey was a bit stressful as we were a little late leaving home, but with minutes to spare we arrived at the port of Dover and set off.

Our crossing was uneventful but amusing as Dazzer didn't pack his sea legs. We arrived at Calais around 7pm and once we were off the ferry we set off for our destination.

The drive from Calais was expected to take around 7 hours therefore we had planned to make several stops on the way for food, coffee and forty winks. But as the excitement got the better of us we didn't sleep en route and we arrived on the nearby camp site at around 6.30am after a long slow drive down.

As part of the package from Exclusive Angling Holidays we had the use of a static mobile home on a local camp site. The camp site had a shower block, Wi-Fi, swimming pool and a bar but at that time in the morning we simply hit the showers freshened up and got a couple of hours of sleep. Nick arrived at the caravan and took us to the lakes, which are about 10 minutes away and we got a first look at the complex. It contains three, spring-fed lakes which have a good head of carp and cats and a uniquely designed natural bait pool, which contained plenty of lives to get us started. We agreed with Nick that we would replace what we had used at the end of the trip. Once on Bleu we walked around with Nick and he

told us how the venue had been fishing and how others had approached it, as it is vital to get some local knowledge especially on a new water. Once Nick had left us to get sorted, we walked the lake again and agreed the boundaries of each swim. This ensured that we got the best water for each swim before we knew who was fishing where. Once this was agreed we drew a number from the hat, the person with number 1 got first choice of swim and number 2 got second, and so on. Following this, we set about unloading the vehicles and setting up our bivvys/homes for the six nights. The swims were nicely spaced and with enough room for even the largest of bivvys. At 6.30 that evening our dinner arrived. The menu for Charlie's kitchen is very good and it's great to have a home cooked meal delivered to your swim. It was a very welcome sight as we were all very hungry. The dinner was shortly dispatched and then it was time to get some baits out for the first night. I had decided to fish a live bait on the dumbbell rig, popped up worms and a chunk of Spam. Most of my catting in the past has been on venues which don't allow you to live bait so I really wanted to try fishing with lives. At only 7.30pm my Spam was picked up by a 37lb 9oz cat, it wasn't a monster but getting your first fish on a new venue always calms the nerves. After re-baiting I returned to the chaps to continue the typical fishing chatter and 'The one that got away' stories, but we didn't have to wait too long before Dazzer's tied off live bait

The beautiful
Lac Bleu in the
Dordogne.





was snapped up at 7.50pm by a rather angry and rather feisty cat, she went 56lb 10oz.

Dazzer re-set his rig and with the comment of "They are getting bigger chaps" still ringing in my ears, Wayne's tied off rig also did a disappearing act at 10pm and this time to a 62lb 11oz cat. Then as quickly as they had arrived, they moved off and everything went quiet We all retired to our bivvys with excitement and hope for the evening ahead.

Sunday 23rd

My night was interrupted at 1am with a run on my dumbbell rig, and after a good 10 minute fight, the fish started to come towards the bank, as it came to the surface it seemed to almost smile at me before flicking his tail over his head and dislodging the hook and sending my rig flying towards Wayne. I returned to my sleeping bag and got a couple of hours before getting a shout of "Get up, Ian has a donkey" and I staggered down the bank with the camera to find a very happy and half undressed Ian with a massive 95lb 10oz cat that took a couple of pellets just before 3am. It was the biggest cat I had ever seen on the bank and I was amazed by the fact that Ian managed to land it without help and in a 50" net (Sadly the net lost the fight and broke as a result). If it was only a couple of pounds heavier he would have won a bottle of Champagne for

having a 100lb fish. I took some pictures of Ian's monster and we all returned to our respective bivvys and went back to sleep. I was woken by a run on my Spam rod at 7.15am it was a much bigger fish, it was slow, deliberate, heavy and not very impressed with being hooked. I was taking my time after losing the last fish, but with my head back in this fight the fish finally slipped into the net, and she went 89lb 11oz and to say I was over the moon was an understatement. With photos taken and my nerves calmed, I returned to my bivvy to catch my breath.

The rest of the morning was slow and lazy and to be honest most of us didn't get out of our bivvys until well after 11am. I guess the drive and the fishing had taken its toll. The day went past without blinking, and Dazzer and I went back to the camp site to clean up and Wayne headed off to Lac Vert for a quick trial session. Vert is a small lake with a good head of cats up to 60lb. When we returned only one and a half hours later Wayne looked very pleased as he bent into another catfish, he had a total of six cats with the biggest going 48lb 12oz all of them on popped up live baits.

As evening arrived we had our sausage casserole, mash and cabbage that I prepared. We agreed our plan of attack, and the overall plan was very much like the night before, dumbbells, tied off rigs, meat and pellets. At 8.50pm

Adam with a cracking 87 pounder.
Inset: A night time 59 for Wayne

the rig that had worked so well in Vert produced a run for Wayne on Bleu. Amazingly it was the same fish Dazzer had had the night before but she was 10oz lighter at 56lb exactly but just as grumpy and not that well behaved on the bank. Following our encounters with this fish we have named it "Her indoors" because if you get on the wrong side of her you're in trouble.

Sometimes life has a way of throwing a curve ball and this time Wayne was caught by his own plan. We agreed with Dazzer that the first person who caught a 60lb cat would get a bucket of water! As Wayne's first from the previous night went 62lb 11oz, he was due a soaking.

Almost an hour later at 9.40pm Wayne was in again, but this time on the tied-off rig and this was in a different league. It started slowly moving up the bank to our left and finally slowed down near the far corner on the lake, and then without much warning kicked up a gear and kited along the far bank. This prompted a bit of concern but Ian managed to get us calm and Wayne managed to turn the fish. The fight was very tiring for both parties but on this occasion man won and Wayne had a 97lb 4oz cat on the bank. The rest of the night was very quiet for everyone.

At 116lb 5oz, Dazzer set a new lake record with this monster.



Monday 24th

During a conversation with Nick, he mentioned that sea baits had been doing well, so I took that advice and chopped a mackerel into three and flicked out a section to see what would happen, and by 7.30am I had a run. It was a 61lb 7oz and I was grateful for the tip. Once a new tail section had been dispatched to the chosen spot it was time to enjoy a full English breakfast provided by Charlie and her mum.

The plan for the day was a short trip to the camp site for a quick freshen up and then a cat fish match on Vert between 1 and 4pm, so the rods were brought in and Wayne, Dazzer and Ian set off for a shower, and I stayed behind to fish on and to my surprise the mackerel bait went off again, but at noon this time. I played the fish almost to the net and the chaps returned which was a great result as it was bigger, it went 87lb 12oz.

We all moved up to Vert for the cat fish match. It was a simple set up 2 rods only one for cats and one for live bait catching. Wayne set the pace with a 27lb 13oz cat, and Dazzer followed shortly after with a 49lb 7oz cat. The bites didn't come so fast for Ian and I but Ian got started with a 20lb 6oz fish. After three hours we had caught a stack of cats and the results of the Vert Cat challenge were:

1st Dazzer with 3 cats for 91lb 2oz
2nd Wayne with 3 cats for 72lb 8oz
3rd Ian with 2 cats for 47lb 8oz
4th Adam with 2 cats for 29lb 7oz, well someone has to be last.
All of these cats came on live baits.

After the match Dazzer bathed in the glory of winning the match. His prize was to cook dinner for everyone (not the greatest prize really) and after that we all set our traps for the night to come. The evening silence was broken at 9.15 when Wayne's pellet baited meat bait produced a 53lb 8oz. This fish was distinctive as it had lost one of its large whiskers, once she was safely returned we sat around chatting.

Tuesday 25th

We all felt hopeful for the night as the lake seemed to change its mood, and at 3.15am I was woken by a massive splash and Ian's alarms playing a very happy tune, just a single tone. Fish on! This fish put up a great fight and once she was carefully unhooked it weighed in at 86lb 1oz. I said to Ian, well done that's two big fish so far and with a broad smile on his face Ian said "There is no



Wayne and the boys getting to grips with this fine fish of 110lb 8oz

point kitten bashing” While Ian and I were sorting out his fish, Wayne’s alarm played the same tune (4am) and he was in again over his pellets with meat. This time a 59lb 2oz fish was landed. Until tonight Wayne had never caught a fish on meat so it’s not a bad way to start.

What was left of that night and the following morning was quiet and therefore at 10am Dazzer and I set off for a shower and a quick run to the shop. We got less than five minutes away and got a call to head back as Ian had picked up Dazzer’s run and the fish was big. We returned to the lake as quickly as possible and found Ian bent into something on Dazzer’s rod. At this point no one had even seen the fish. Dazzer took over and within five minutes the fish was in the net and on the bank. Once the fish was on the mat it was very clear that this was the biggest fish so far. It took three of us to lift the fish onto the scales and then Dazzer leapt into the air as the scales returned the verdict, 116lb 5oz. Just before returning the fish Charlie arrived and she got to witness the fish in all its glory. We took a few trophy shots and returned the beast to the water. It was a truly special moment.

Once the dust had settled Wayne said tonight we will get our bottle of Champagne after all and that is the new Lac Bleu record. We later found out it was the biggest fish in all three lakes, so a lake and venue record, well done Dazzer. So a bit delayed and very happy Dazzer and I set off on our original quest, and this time we got clean, sorted and to the shops without interruptions. The rest of the day was spent being lazy, as a sense of calm had come over everyone.



Ian Knott struggles with this fattie of just over 86lb

In the evening and as promised, Nick brought down a bottle of Champagne which was quickly dispatched. We then re-set our traps and settled in for the night, it turned out to be uneventful, but that’s cat fishing, and I was glad for a good night’s sleep, if nothing else.

Wednesday 26th

The day started with warm sunshine and it was very welcome as so far the weather had been far from perfect for the fisherman, but great for the fishing. Then just before 11am my alarms started to give a somewhat familiar tone and I was in. After a very spirited fight the fish slipped into the net, we weighed it at a cracking 87lb 15oz. As we set up for some pictures I received a bucket of water over my head care of Wayne,

apparently the fish needed it! That afternoon was very quiet as the sun was blasting down on the lake but once it began to drop lower in the sky the mood changed and the lake seemed to come alive with the frogs and birds starting their evening song. Within 20 minutes of casting my rod went flying off, this time it was a 49lb cat at 8.30pm. So after that excitement, we re-set and prepared for the evening to come. As we sat around talking, Wayne noticed some interest on his tied off live bait. As he approached the rod there was an almighty splash and the bait vanished and his rod attempted to bend double. The fish headed for the overflow drain which has a large metal walkway attached. Amazingly the fish seemed to swim just over the walkway and then off down the right hand bank. The fish was very heavy and deliberate but after a good solid fight Wayne managed to slip the fish into the landing net. It was smiles all round as it was another massive fish. At first we thought that it might be the same fish Dazzer had caught, but the damaged pectoral

fin and split whisker confirmed it was a different fish and the previous lake record. This time the fish was 110lb 8oz. Wayne was over the moon. We called Nick and he came down to see the fish and take some pictures, which is great as we could all get in the picture. Once the photos had been taken, Wayne went to re-set his bait, but before that he checked his line and found it was very badly frayed for about 4 meters from the swivel. It's a testament to the strength of the Pro Tough line that he even got the fish in.

Thursday 27th

We settled back down at just after midnight, due to Wayne's fish taking a long time to recover and Wayne taking even longer to calm down. Then at just after 4.15am my rod baited with chicks went screaming off and I had an 87lb 9oz cat. This cat had graced the bank before during our visit and on both occasions I caught it therefore we called the fish "Stretch" as both the fish and angler are long and lean. Then at 9.30am Wayne's

Dazzer Wickson with a beautifully marked catfish typical of the size caught from Lac Vert.



rods went off, once again care of the chicks and this time a 49lb 3oz cat came into the net. This fish was also caught the night before by me at 49lb exactly. These fish don't seem to care if they have been caught recently if they want the bait they have it. So as the final day progressed, we just relaxed and enjoyed it. It's such a great place to be and we all enjoyed the fishing, location and most of all the company. We have had a great trip. As it was our final evening Nick came down and we ate dinner together. This evening dinner was Charlie's cowboy stew and it's highly recommended.

Friday 28th

On our last morning Ian was the last person to bank a fish. However this time it was a small jack pike of 3lbs. Even for a pike this must be a scary place to live, especially when you are bite size! The journey back was long and we hit some traffic in Paris. As we finally approached customs at Calais we saw a queue of cars waiting. Ian and I finally cleared customs and checked in and the lady from P&O sent us directly to the ferry. We got on the ferry and hopped out of the car just in time to see the doors close without Wayne and Dazzer. Thankfully they got on the next ferry and we all



made it home.

In summary the trip was incredible, the journey is a long one but so worthwhile. We all set off with hopes of a fish over 80lb and we all did that comfortably. Our best fish were; Adam 89lb 11oz, Ian 95lb 10oz, Wayne 110lb 8oz and Dazzer 116lb 5oz. In total we had over 1430lb of cats from Bleu and over 600lb from Vert, but as great as the fishing is, the simple beauty of the location is what will have me heading back again.

Another 80 pounder
for Adam, this time
at 89lb 11oz